NUMB. CLXV

The SPECTATOR.

Illa; Quis & me, inquit, miseram, & te perdidit, Orpheu?
Jamque vale: feror ingenti circumdata nocte,
Invalidasque tibi tendens, heu! non tua, palmas. Virg.

Friday, September 7. 1711.

Constantia was a Woman of extraordinary Wit and Beauty, but very unhappy in a Father, who having arrived at great Riches by his own Industry, took Delight in nothing but Money. *Theodosius* was the younger Son of a decayed, but of great Parts and Learning, improved by liberal and vertuous Education. When he was in the twentieth Year of his Age he became acquainted with *Constantia*, who had not then passed her fifteenth. They lived but a few Miles Distance from her Father's House; he had frequent Opportunities of seeing her; the Advantages of a good Person and a pleasing Conversation, made such an Impression in her Heart as is impossible for Time to deface: He was himself smitten with *Constantia*. A long Acquaintance with them still discover new Beauties in each other, by Degrees rais'd in them that mutual Passion which had an Influence on their following Lives. It unhappily happened, that in the Midst of this Interval of Love and Friendship between *Theodosius* and *Constantia*, there broke out an irreparable Quarrel between their Parents, the one valuing himself too much upon his Birth, and the other upon his Possessions. The Father of *Constantia* was so incensed at the Father of *Theodosius*, that he contracted an unreasonable Aversion to the Person, insomuch that he forbad him his House, and charged his Daughter upon her Duty never to see him more. In the mean Time, to break off all Communication between the two Lovers, who he knew entertained secret Hopes of some favourable Opportunity that might bring them together, he found out a young Gentleman of a good Fortune and an agreeable Person, whom he pitched upon as a Husband for his Daughter. He soon concerted this Affair so well, that he told his Daughter it was his Design to marry her to such a Gentleman, and that her Wedding should be celebrated on the next Day. *Constantia*, who was over-awed with the Authority of her Father, and unable to object any thing against so advantagious a Match, receiv'd the Proposal with a profound Silence; which her Father looked upon in her, as the most decent Manner of a Virgin's giving her Consent to an Overture of that Nature. The Noise of this intended Marriage soon reached *Theodosius*, who after a long Tumult of Passions which naturally rise in a Lover's Heart on such an Occasion, writ the following Letter to *Constantia*.

THE Thought of my *Constantia*, which for some Years has been my only Happiness, is become a greater Torment to me than I am able to bear. Must I then live to see you another's? The very Fields, and Meadows, where we have so often talked together, grow painful to me; Life it self is become a Burden. May you long be happy in the World, but forget that there was ever such a Man as

THEODOSIUS.

This Letter was conveyed to *Constantia* that very Evening, who fainted at the reading of it; and the next Morning she was much more alarm'd by two or three Messengers, that came to her Father's House one after another to enquire if they had heard any thing of *Theodosius*, who it seems had left his Chamber about Midnight, and could no where be found. The deep Melancholy which had hung upon his Mind some Time before, made them apprehend the worst that could befall him. *Constantia*, who knew that nothing but the Report of her Marriage could have driven him to such Extremities, was not to be comforted: She now accused herself for having so tamely given an Ear to the Proposal of a Husband, and looked upon the new Lover as the Murderer of *Theodosius*: In short, she resolved to suffer the utmost Effects of her Father's Displeasure, rather than comply with a Marriage which appeared to her so full of Guilt and Horrour. The Father seeing himself entirely rid of *Theodosius*, and likely to keep a considerable Portion in his Family, was not very much concerned at the obstinate Refusal of his Daughter; and did not find it very difficult to excuse himself upon that Account to his intended Son-in-law, who had all along regarded this Alliance rather as a Marriage of Convenience than of Love. *Constantia* had now no Relief but in her Devotions and Exercises of Religion, to which her Afflictions had so entirely subjected her Mind, that after some Years had abated the Violence of her Sorrows, and settled her Thoughts in a kind of Tranquility, she resolv'd to pass the Remainder of her Days in a Convent. Her Father was not displeased with her Resolution, that would save Money in his Family, and readily complied with his Daughter's Intentions. Accordingly in the Twenty-fifth Year of her Age, while her Beauty was yet in all its Height and Bloom, he carried her to a neighbouring City, in order to look out a Sisterhood of Nuns among whom to place his Daughter. There was in this Place a Father of a Convent who was very much renowned for his Piety and exemplary Life; and as it is usual in the *Romish* Church for those who are under any great Affliction or Trouble of Mind to apply themselves to the most eminent Confessors for Pardon and Consolation, our beautiful Votary took the Opportunity of confessing herself to this celebrated Father.

We must now return to *Theodosius*, who the very Morning that the above-mentioned Enquiries had been made after him, arrived at a religious House in the City where now *Constantia* resided; and desiring that Secrecy and Concealment of the Father of the Convent which is very usual upon any extraordinary Occasion, he made himself one of the Order, with a private Vow never to enquire after *Constantia*, whom he looked upon as given away to his Rival upon the Day on which, according to common Fame, their Marriage was to have been solemnized. Having in his Youth made a good Progress

in

learning, that he might dedicate himself up more entirely to Religion he entered into holy Orders, and in a few Years became renowned for his Sanctity of Life, and those pious Sentiments which he inspired into all that conversed with him. It was this holy Man to whom *Constantia* had determined to apply herself in Confession, tho' neither she nor any other besides the Prior of the Convent knew any thing of his Name or Family. The gay, the amiable *Theodosius* had now taken upon him the Name of Father *Francis*; and was so far concealed in a long Beard, a shaved Head, and a religious Habit, that it was impossible to discover the Man of the World in the venerable Conventual.

As he was one Morning shut up in his Confessional, *Constantia* kneeling by him, opened the State of her Soul to him; and after having given him the History of a Life full of Innocence, she burst out in Tears, and entered upon that Part of her Story in which he himself had so great a Share. My Behaviour, says she, has I fear been the Death of a Man who had no other Fault but that of loving me too much. Heaven only knows how dear he was to me whilst he lived, and how bitter the Remembrance of him has been to me since his Death. She here paused, and lifted up her Eyes that streamed with Tears towards the Father; who was so moved with the Sense of her Sorrows, that he could only command his Voice, which was broke with Sighs and Sobbings, so far as to bid her proceed. She followed his Directions, and in a Flood of Tears poured out her Heart before him. The Father could not forbear weeping aloud, insomuch that in the Agonies of his Grief the Seat shook under him. *Constantia*, who thought the good Man was thus moved by his Compassion towards her, and by the Horrour of her Guilt, proceeded with the utmost Contrition to acquaint him with that Vow of Virginity in which she was going to engage herself, as the proper Attonement for her Sins, and the only Sacrifice she could make to the Memory of *Theodosius*. The Father, who by this time had pretty well composed himself, burst out again in Tears upon hearing that Name to which he had been so long disused, and receiving this Instance of an unparelled Fidelity from one who he thought had several Years since given herself up to the Possession of another. Amidst the Interruptions of his Sorrow, seeing his Penitent overwhelmed with Grief, he was only able to bid her from time to time be comforted——To tell her that her Sins were forgiven her——That her Guilt was not so great as she apprehended——That she should not suffer herself to be afflicted above Measure. After which he recovered himself enough to give her the Absolution in Form; directing her at the same time to repair to him again the next Day, that he might encourage her in the pious Resolution she had taken, and give her suitable Exhortations for her Behaviour in it. *Constantia* retired, and the next Morning renewed her Applications. *Theodosius* having mann'd his Soul with proper Thoughts and Reflections, exerted himself on this Occasion in the best Manner he could, to animate his Penitent in the Course of Life she was entering upon, and wear out of her Mind those groundless Fears and Apprehensions which had taken Possession of it; concluding, with a Promise to her, that he would from time to time continue his Admonitions when she should have taken upon her the holy Veil. The Rules of our respective Orders, says he, will not permit that I should see you, but you may assure your self not only of having a Place in my Prayers, but of receiving such frequent Instructions as I can convey to you by Letters. Go on chearfully in the glorious Course you have undertaken, and you will quickly find such a Peace and Satisfaction in your Mind which it is not in the Power of the World to give.

Constantia's Heart was so elevated with the Discourse of Father *Francis*, that the very next Day she entered upon her Vow. Assoon as the Solemnities of her Reception were over, she retired, as it is usual, with the Abbess into her own Apartment.

The Abbess had been informed the Night before of all things that had passed between her Novitiate and Father *Francis*: From whom she now delivered her the following Letter.

'AS the First-Fruits of those Joys and Consolations
' which you may expect from the Life you are
' now engaged in, I must acquaint you that *Theodosius*,
' whose Death sits so heavy upon your Thoughts, is
' still alive; and that the Father to whom you have
' confessed your self, was once that *Theodosius* whom
' you so much lament. The Love which we have had
' for one another will make us more happy in its Disappointment, than it cou'd have done in its Success.
' Providence has disposed of us for our Advantage,
' tho' not according to our Wishes. Consider
' *Theodosius* still as dead, but assure your self of one who
' will not cease to pray for you in Father FRANCIS.

Constantia saw that the Hand-writing agreed with the Contents of the Letter; and upon reflecting on the Voice of the Person, the Behaviour, and also all the extreme Sorrow of the Father during her Confession, she discovered *Theodosius* in every Particular. After having wept with Tears of Joy, It is enough, says she, *Theodosius* is still in Being; I shall live with Comfort and dye in Peace. The Letters which the Father sent her afterwards are yet extant in the Nunnery where she resided; and are often read to the young Religious in order to inspire them with good Resolutions and Sentiments of Virtue. It so happened, that after *Constantia* had lived about ten Years in the Cloyster, a violent Feaver broke out in the Place, that swept away great Multitudes, and among others *Theodosius*. Upon his Death-bed he sent his Benediction in a very moving Manner to *Constantia*; who at that time was herself so far gone in the same Distemper, that she lay delirious. Upon the Intermission which generally precedes Death in Sickness of this Nature, the Abbess, finding that the Physicians had given her over, told her that *Theodosius* was just gone before her, and that he had sent her his Benediction in his last Moments. *Constantia* received it with Pleasure. And now, says she, if I do not ask any thing improper, let me be buried by *Theodosius*. My Vow reaches no farther than the Grave. What I ask is I hope no Violation of it.——She died soon after, and was interred according to her Request.

Their Tombs are still to be seen, with a short Latin Inscription over them to the following Purpose.

Here lie the Bodies of Father *Francis* and Sister *Constance*. *They were lovely in their Lives, and in their Deaths they were not divided.*

ADVERTISEMENTS.

The Governour and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's-Bay give Notice, That they have divided the Sum of 1977 l. 12 s. 6 d. pursuant to their Proposal for enlarging Marriage-Portions amongst such who were married before the 24th of June last; and that the second Dividend on May-Flowers will be made the 1st of January next unto such who shall be married before the 23d of December next, pursuant to the said Proposal. They also give further Notice, That a Dividend will be made on the 6th of October next, pursuant to their Proposal, for enabling Apprentices to set up their Trades, unto such whose Contract or Indentures expire on or before the 26th of this Instant September. Note, That the Proof of each Claim be not made and lodged in the Office 14 Days or more before the said Dividend, or if the quarterly Interest due on the 25th of March and 24th of June last be not paid on or before the 24th of this instant September, the Person or Persons neglecting will be then absolutely excluded.

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